

**A CASE STUDY OF USING COMMUNICATIVE
LANGUAGE GAMES FOR UMS ESL
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN DEVELOPING
PARTICIPATION IN SPEAKING SKILLS.**

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by

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**KAJIAN KES MENGGUNAKAN PERMAINAN BAHASA SECARA
KOMUNIKATIF UNTUK PELAJAR IJAZAH SARJANA MUDA UMS DALAM
MEMBANGUNKAN PENYERTAAN DALAM KEMAHIRAN BERBAHASA.**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana permainan bahasa mempengaruhi pembelajaran lisan Bahasa Inggeris dari segi penyertaan dan motivasi melalui suasana pembelajaran konteks-sedar. Permainan membantu pelajar-pelajar untuk melibatkan diri dalam pembelajaran berdasarkan teori motivasi, melibatkan pelbagai strategi pendidikan, termasuk pembelajaran berasaskan Permainan, pembelajaran Kolaboratif dan pembelajaran konteks-sedar. Satu kajian kualitatif yang menggunakan kaedah kajian kes telah digunakan. Kumpulan berjumlah 29 orang pelajar mengambil bahagian dalam permainan aktiviti pembelajaran.

Permainan ini terdiri daripada empat aktiviti pembelajaran, iaitu Quick Quiz, Mind Your Head, Guess What? and Spontaneous Story Telling. Peserta adalah terdiridaripada pelajar dari Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Sebelum permainan dimulakan, arahan jelas diberikan. Semasa permainan, pemerhatian dan temu bual telah dijalankan oleh penyelidik. Keputusan penilaian penglibatan dan motivasi dalam pembelajaran menunjukkan bahawa menggabungkan permainan dalam proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris boleh mencapai hasil pembelajaran lisan Bahasa Inggeris yang lebih baik. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bukti-bukti mengenai penggunaan bahasa lisan pelajar terdiri daripada bercakap , berbisik , menjerit dan ketawa ; semasa aktiviti permainan dalam pelbagai tahap . Bukti-bukti penggunaan bukan lisan iaitu mendengar dan para- bahasa (isyarat) adalah ketara. Secara fizikal , komunikasi dan bahasa badan yang digambarkan; dan penggunaan emosi seperti semangat, yakin , keseronokan dan kekurangan keseronokan didapati semasa penyertaan permainan .

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand how language games influence oral English learning in terms of participation and motivation through a context-aware learning environment. Game helps students to engage in learning activities based on motivation theory, involving various educational strategies, including game-based learning, collaborative learning, and context-aware learning. A qualitative research using case study method was adopted. A group of 29 students participated in the game learning activities.

The games consisted of four learning activities, namely “Quick Quiz”, “Mind Your Head”, “Time’s Up!” and “Spontaneous Story Telling”. Participants were undergraduate students from Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Before the game activities, clear instruction was given. During the game activities, observations and interviews was carried out by researcher. The evaluation results of the learning participation and learning motivation demonstrated that incorporating games into the English learning process could achieve better oral English learning outcomes. The findings showed evidences on the students’ verbal language use comprised of speaking, whispering, screaming and, laughing; during the game activities in varying degree. Evidences of non-verbal usage such as listening and para-language (gesture) are noticeable. Physically, communication and body language are portrayed; and emotion usage such as enthusiasm, confident, enjoyment and lack of enjoyment are found during game participation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Communication is a vital part in learning. Speaking is the productive part of oral English in communication while listening is its receptive part (Celce Murcia, 1989). The teacher centered approach that is still widely used today encourages learners less to practice the productive part which is vital for communication. Hence, real language could not occur. Even by using a conventional oral teaching method, learners still find it hard to realise real language conversation outside the classroom.

The problem we face today in oral proficiency among ESL learners remained the same since decades ago as students in Malaysia lack the real and authentic exposure in the skill; especially speaking skill, hence they could not communicate well. In the classroom, teachers usually ask their students to write and read a guided dialogue that has already be prepared beforehand or role-played an act that has undergone a series of training before presenting it which revealed more of mechanical drill of language in action. This makes the activity looks realistic but not real or authentic as they do not use the language spontaneously. In such traditional classroom, students may feel anxious, scared and low in motivation. They feel that they need to be perfect in all angles; linguistics, accent, body gesture, memorizing of dialogues, turns and lines, therefore rendered it to be unreal or robotic. Without the opportunity of real exposure of how an authentic English language

communication should be taught, students appeared handicapped in executing their crucial daily activities in English. It is highly recommended that games can be used in teaching speaking as games are fun activities which endorse interaction, thinking, learning and problem solving strategies spontaneously. Furthermore, games are affective tools for learning because they offer students a hypothetical environment in which they can discover substitute decisions without the risk of failure.

By using language games as the core approach in this study, it is hope that the conventional teacher centered can be turned into an active learner centered classroom. Language games approach emphasizes the communication activities that involve the real use of language in daily life situation. It offers good production of input into the skill focus and hope to enhance their confidence and real usage of the language. Hence, this study explored learners' responses in using games strategy in term of their motivation and participation in the communicative games interaction.

In this chapter, I dwelled on the background of the study that formed the basis to this study. I weaved the dilemma faced via problem statement that led to my exploitation; this was consequently transformed into research aims, objectives, and the research questions. I also described the conceptual framework used in this study.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

English language is spoken and used in every part of the world; it is pliable and easily adaptable to the needs and demands of all sectors in the working world, social and academic purposes (Offner, 1995). In Malaysia, English has been taught as a second language in all primary and secondary schools in line since the early British invasion; and not to mentioned, tertiary level too. Learners are taught English to enable them to use the language in their everyday use, for higher level education as well as working purposes; especially in the University level. As globalization increases, Malaysians need to be proficient in English, as a medium for communicating with people from other countries. Roy Pearse (1983) mentioned succinctly that real language is when you use the language to say something, not to say something to use language. So, in order for them to cope with the real world communication, real world activities should be taught in the classroom to encourage students to use their language in real and often familiar situations. According to Stevick (as cited in Offner, 1995, p. 98), “The real reason why people use a language is not to produce right answers or even to increase their competence in it, but simply to say things to one another.” This is the focal point in this study.

According to Celce Murcia (1986), one way of improving the social dynamic in language class that help to encourage communication is variety in learning activities on many different levels. Communicative activities such as role play, interviews, information gap, games and language exchange focus on the language function. The activities are related to students’ life, by using games in learning, they could use the learning component in the future. As said by Garnett (2005) Fear and stress make learning impossible.

These activities are essential to enhance learners' motivation while practicing communication outside the classroom. Games also can gain confidence and love among friends after sharing something that is real. It is time for language teachers to teach English in a way that is best going to serve their students in life, and not treat language as a purely academic exercise.

By doing so, classroom participation will increase. According to Tomanovic (2003), children has a right in participation, this include; issues about identity, autonomy, freedom of choice and involvement in decision making. Participation is closely related to learning, learning is a process that is mediated through encounters with others, through interacting and negotiating with others (Bruner, 1986). Learning as participation can be understood as an ongoing learning activity to which there is no end (Rogoff, 2003), meaning that even after the ending of a lesson, the learning process through interacting with peers, outside the classroom on the activity learnt is never ending. New knowledge can also be found through participation. Therefore, games are introduced to reinforce as well as to increase learners' stimuli so that they can learn in a fun and relax environment.

1.2 THE PROBLEM

When we learn our first language, everything is in the natural world. We hardly notice the learning process and we almost always acquire the speaking skill first. In learning a second language some of us learn it in a natural environment too when we were thrust into the second language setting and environment. In situation like this we often sink or swim – fortunately most swim. However, most second language learners do not get this opportunity i.e. the natural environment of the second language we were trying to acquire. Why is this so? Not all household in Malaysia use English in their home other than their first language, Malay. So, they can only rely on schools to be exposed to second language. In a normal Malaysian classroom, we are often stuck with 30-40 students per lesson. As a teacher, it is very hard to facilitate and cope with each one of them within the given time and their needs and understanding are varied. To facilitate them one-on-one would be fine if the skill taught is from writing or reading base or even listening as the result can be seen on paper, but not in speaking. A group presentation or dialogue can be applied, but will all of them participate? Not to mention it will be tedious for one teacher to listen to 40 students in one go. Speaking activity is usually dominated by exercises from textbook such as completing blank dialogues, rearranging jumbled dialogues and given limited time to carry out dialogues. To add, questions and answer are mostly structured and predictable and often there is only one correct, predetermined answer. Can this trigger authentic speaking?

Teaching of any language to unmotivated learners will always be a challenge. Even teaching a second language to motivated learners is a problem. This is because motivation

alone doesn't guarantee success. Learning a second language such as English in a formal setting with limited exposure in the real practice and use of the language can kill the enthusiasm of many aspiring learners. If learners have problem motivating themselves to learn a second language, teachers needs to offer effective and efficient pedagogy that suit the needs of every child.

Generally, teachers have problems teaching all the four basic skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Arguable however, teachers are more at home teaching writing and reading but often shy away from teaching the skills of listening and speaking. Dealing with speaking in English language and the use to communication and participation in the classroom seems to be a big challenge for second language speakers. Folse (2006) stated that students do not have the chance to talk in classes. Teacher seems to do all the talking while learners just sit and listen passively most of the time. For these reasons the teaching of listening is often neglected.

Most teachers are at sea as to how to provide students with opportunities to develop their communicative skills and this prove a challenge even in the higher institutions of learning. Despite the fact that the English language is the medium of instruction at the university level, many students (including final year graduates) still struggle to communicate in English for academic purposes (Mustapha, 2010) From my experience of teaching in low English proficient students and from the literature perused, I gather that in the teaching and learning of spoken English, our undergraduate students tend to shy away from participating in class speaking activities prepared by the teachers. Usually, they

preferred to keep quiet during English lesson and were reluctant to speak in English. The main reasons for this is fear of being ridicule and lack of confidence.

The dilemma facing the Malaysian students now is the inability to communicate in English in a positive way. According to McCroskey (1984), many students even at higher levels of study experience some level of fear and anxiety when asked to communicate, especially in public. This feeling of discomfort when communicating is called communication apprehension. It can be stressful for them when they are expected to speak in the second language. Therefore, students are unable to perform well in speaking skills, and they fail to communicate well.

As such it is imperative to find a supplementary technique that the teachers could use effectively and efficiently and that is comfortable to the students. A technique that could cast away their shyness embraced their fear and enhanced their confidence to take part in the learning process. Hue (2010) in his study showed that using language games will boost the student's oral skill to the limit. Their responses and participation could later become real communication and as communication improves so will oral competency in English.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

People communicate when there is a reason to do so. It is opinion that communicative competence improved with practice and practice must have authentic situations. Language games are said to provide these conditions i.e. reason to communicate and an authentic situation. The aim of this study was to introduce Communicative Language Games particularly The Quick Quiz, Mind Your Head, and Spontaneous Story Telling to a group of UMS's undergraduate learner in the UB00202 "Oral Communication" subject and explore classroom participation.

The objectives of this study are to;

(1) Determine students use of language freely by determining:

- i. The use of verbal language during games
- ii. The use of non-verbal language during games

(2) Determine students participation by determining:

- i. The physical involvement in classroom participation
- ii. The emotional involvement in classroom participation

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research was guided by the following research questions in this study are as follows:

- 1) Observe students' motivation (reaction)
 1. Do the games motivate the students to use the English language freely?
 - i. How do the students use the language verbally in the games?
 - ii. How do students use the language non-verbally in the games?
- 2) Observe students' participation (interaction)
 1. Do the games allow the students to participate freely?
 - i. How physically involved are students in the games?
 - ii. How emotionally involved are students in the games?

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

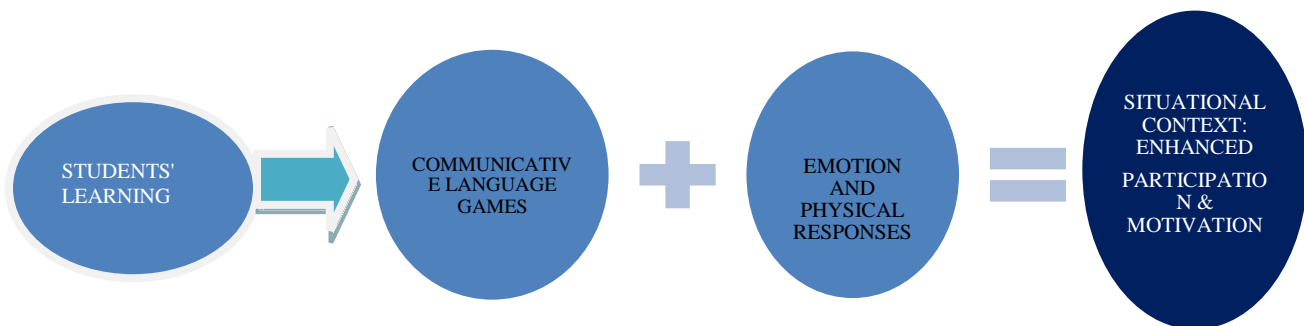


Figure 1.1 Communicative Language Games for Enhancing Motivation and Participation in ESL

(Adapted from Ellis, Rod.(1985)*Understanding Second Language Acquisition: Contexts, Pedagogy & Participatory Learning*.Oxford& Brownlee, Jo.)

In this study, the constructivism and motivation theories have been applied to the research design. With regard to the constructivism theory, Merrill (1994) claimed that teaching activities should be designed for learners who in the past played passive roles, merely accepting information, but who have now come to actively build on the knowledge gained during the learning process. It is after all one of the most important educational goals to enable students to put the knowledge they have acquired into practice. Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer (1993) argued that deliberate practice is the most effective method for enhancing the current performance level. As for the motivation theory applied in this study, the work by Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, (2000) presented empirical evidence on how extrinsic motivation (EM) and intrinsic motivation (IM) conformed to the second and foreign language (L2) field. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are those actions carried out to achieve some intended goal, such as earning a reward or avoiding punishment (Noels et al., 2000). In contrast, intrinsic motivation (IM) refers to the motivation to engage in an activity because doing so is enjoyable and fulfilling (Noels et al., 2000). McMahon (2006) argued that students' active motivation will push them to strive for better performance, achievement, and ability. This research implies the use of Communicative Language games in the authentic form of language use in learning speaking skill in ESL context. The dependent variable (motivation and participation) is dependent to the independent variable (Communicative Language Games). The relationship between the two variables is linked to variability as shown in the diagram. This Contextual Framework is adapted from Ellis's model of 'Interlanguage Competence' and Brownlee's 'Contexts, Pedagogy & Participatory learning' model. In adapting the Model, two variabilities that measure language, Systematic and Non-systematic variability

are maintained. Systematic variability is then divided to two aspects: 1. Learner's characteristic (Individual variability) and, 2. Linguistic context or situational context language is used (Contextual variability – use of games). Whereas, non-systematic is also divided into two aspects: 1. Free variation of forms and rules operated in language used (Free variability) and, 2. Learner's emotional or physical condition (Performance variability). In a simpler way, I group them into two categories; language pattern and, emotion and physical responses. Both reflect the two variability described by Ellis (1985).

I adapted the model by highlighting the Communicative Language Games as it is freer and focuses on fluency of the language rather than accuracy. It is aligned with Ellis's model as games may provide the opportunity for going beyond 'manipulative approaches as proposed by Dunkel (1991) that games are not necessarily about memorizing or providing correct answers, but rather about the performance of skills within a specific system of thinking and acting. This further supported by Kossuth (as cited in Underwood, 1987, p.217) that in game "the user does not think about the language in use, but only about the action and where it might lead next". Both approaches are located in the contexts for learning in this section. Before outlining any activities for the class, teachers/educator has to put several considerations such as the type of skills that may help them achieved the target language. The belief of the teachers on the nature of participatory learning among their students will influence their pedagogical approach on how to implement their teaching accordingly. In this case, language game activities will be used as a teaching tool as well as technique upon reflecting and observing students' needs in language skill development i.e. oral skills.